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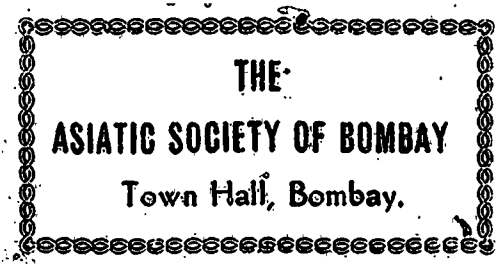

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A MAN'S HEART

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A MAN'S HEART.

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A Poem.

BY

CHARLES MACKAY,

AUTHOR OF "EGERIA," "UNDER GREEN LEAVES," ETC.

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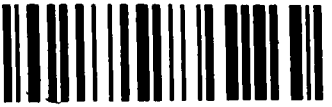

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PROLOGUE.

A MAN'S HEART.

Prologue.

HOW oft through maze and wilderness of Art—
Through regal and imperial galleries—
The traveller roams for half a summer's day,
Vacant and listless; looking with strained eyes
At landscapes worthy of Salvator's hand,
At sweet Madonnas such as Guido loved,
Or on such eloquent portraits, spirit-eyed,
As great Vandyke or Rubens might have drawn.
Yet though he looks, he sees not, save a crowd
Blent as the sands on shore, or leaves in wold;

Then sudden, by a flash, his careless will
And wandering faculties are seized and fixed
By some sweet face, where Love and Sorrow strive
Which of the two shall sanctify it most;
Or by some ruder lineament of man,
With power, and purpose, and relentless Fate,
Seamed in each shaggy furrow of the brow.
Then is he conquered—spell-bound—held in thrall—
Until he throbs with inward sympathy,
And knows them human, as he knows himself,
By the fine fascination that he feels:—
They challenge him to pass them, if he dare,
And look upon him with mute, eloquent eyes,
That seem to say, "Come, read our mystery!"
Their glances follow him where'er he goes;
And so he stands, spell-bound, to give them back
Keen inquisition, and a stare for stare.
He reads whole histories in their painted orbs,

And looks into the chambers of their house,
And saith, "This woman loved, and suffered much,"
Or, "This man's pride was wounded to the quick
In the fierce hates and battles of the world;—
This was pre-doomed to Misery as his dower!"
Or, "this died young—I see it in her eyes."
He holds communion with them on the wall,
And knows them better than his living friends.
Oh, wondrous Art! more wondrous Sympathy!

Such picture saw I in an ancient hall—
The portrait of a lady with dark hair,
And deep dark eyes, with lightnings in their depths;
And lips that seemed to quiver with a grief
That Death itself was impotent to hide.

The picture haunted me—possessed me quite,
Like some sweet tune, bewildered in the brain,

That will not pass, though we should thrust it out;
A present spirit never to be laid
In the far oceans of forgetfulness
By any magic, or adjuring word
Until its time; when as it came—it goes—
Strong in itself, defiant of our will.

The spirit spake to me; the likeness breathed;
I knew the lady and her inmost soul;
Saw her heart's mystery clearer than my own.
Listen, and you shall learn it as I learned:
A tale of Love and Sorrow,—Sorrow and Love.
When shall these twain be parted?—Nevermore!

CANTO I.

AMONG THE FLOWERS.

Among the Flowers.

'TWAS May—sweet May—the jocund English May—
May, growing buxom in the breath of June,
When, 'mid the grass besprent through all its green
With gold and silver,—gold, the buttercups;
And silver, bossed with gold, and tipped with pink,
The bounteous daisies, jewels of the poor,—
Four sweeter blossoms of the teeming earth,
Flow'rets of human kind, God's noblest gifts,
Sported in sunshine, in the chequered glades
Of Erlwood Park—a joyous company,
Blithe as the birds, and fresh as morning dews.

Two of the four were twins, and nine years old—
Dissevered cherries from the selfsame stalk,
And like as cherries to a stranger's eye.
They chased the butterfly; they clomb the trees;
They leaped the running stream, or lay them down
With skyward faces, shaded by their arms,
Weary and spent with frolic that had passed,
Eager and ripe for frolic yet to come.

Apart, their sister, seven sweet summers young,
Sat pleased and happy underneath a thorn,
That dropped its pink-eyed blossoms in her lap,
A cherub and a seraph both in one.

Around her forehead, twined amid her hair,
She wore a wreath of daisies, newly plucked,
And strung on rushes, by the master-hand
Of one three summers older than herself—
A black-eyed, rosy-cheeked, and pensive boy,
Whose greatest joy was study of her face;

And who had wov'n the wreath to crown her queen—
Queen of his heart—which felt but did not know—
For golden haze of youthful ignorance—
The sorrowful joy, and feverish bliss of love,
Prompting his thought, and sparkling in his eyes.
Dear friends they were, although they wist not why,
And close companions. "Sit quite still," he said,
"Dear Edith: do not move your head an inch
Till I have drawn your portrait."

And he drew,
With facile fingers, and a ready touch
For one so young, a semblance of the maid,
Crowned with her garland, and alight with smiles,
And wrote beneath it, "Edith Bellenden,
By Arthur Westwood, on a morn of May."

"For me?" she asked him, with inquiring eyes;
Then put the paper in her tiny breast

And thanked him with a glance, a word—a kiss;
While he, the artist, proud of such a work,
But prouder of acceptance, and reward,
Restored the falling garland to her hair,
And led her to her brothers, where they stood,
Scaring with stones the minnows in the brook;
And said, "Behold her; she's the Queen of May,
And I'm the King!" Whereat one laughed and jeered:
The other, all intent upon a trout
Which he espied beneath a ledge of rock,
Took off his shoes, and paddled in the stream,
Heedless of brother, sister, and the world.

Ten winters passed, and once again 'twas May:
The boys were men, the maid was sweet seventeen;
And all were friends, as in the olden time.
Rich were the Bellendens—surpassing rich:

Compared with them young Westwood was but poor,
Though rich enough to pass his morn of life
To his own fancy, and the art he loved;
To show a fair exterior to the world,
And seem, and be—an English gentleman.
Two years, or ere his eyes beheld the morn,
His father, stepping from a gondola,
Stood in the market-place—an idle man,
And watched the peasant girls of Friuli
Bring flowers to flowerless Venice. Young and fair,
He roamed for pastime, master of himself,
To study Art and Nature in the South.
Here, as he loitered to refresh his soul
With beauty fashioned in immortal stone;
Painted on canvas; streaming from the sky;
Impermeate in all shapes of earth and heaven;
He saw a maiden lovelier than Art
Had e'er imagined in its happiest dream;

With all Italia in her glowing face—
Its beauty, passion, tenderness, and hope.
He saw, admired, and fancied that he loved;—
Love born of idleness and young Romance!
He purchased roses and anemones,
And bade her come to-morrow with fresh flowers,
The choicest she could gather. Morrow came;
And with it came the maiden and her blooms;
Herself a rose and lily both in one;
Fairer than lily—redder than the rose,—
And with a warmth of summer in her smiles
Enough to ripen all the buds of spring.
He overpaid her with too bounteous gold,
Which she refused, with such a wealth of shame
That he was awed; and, more enamoured still,
He sued for pardon like the veriest slave
Who hath incensed a master that he loves,
And cannot rest until his peace be made.

She came no more to Venice. Every day
He watched the arriving gondolas and barques,
In hope to see the maid among her peers—
A queen-like rose among mere daffodils;
But she, Francesca Pia, ne'er returned.
He gazed upon the blue Friulian Alps,
Snow-capped and sharp against the cloudless heaven,
And thought how blissful all his days might be,
Forgetting England and his ancient home,
If in life's noon, he might, beloved of her,
Dwell in the valleys, careless of the world.
He sought her—was repulsed—and sought again;
Till passion, like a flame by tempest fanned,
Throve on obstruction, and consumed his soul.
Thus did he live and suffer; thus in pain
Refine an idle fancy into love—
Love golden—freed by Sorrow's fire from dross—
Love purified—the love of soul to soul.

And she took pity; she—the peasant girl—
Met the proud English stranger face to face,
And gave her hand, like lady to a lord,
Equal in love, and pride, and sacrifice,
Superior in her purity of heart.
Well she became her new-born dignity,
Learned English from the lessons of her heart,
And spake it with a prettiness of fault
More lovely than perfection; learned to sing,—
And sung with such a gush of melody,
That staid approval—of the English mood—
Forgot itself in rapture.

But she died,
Pining for Italy; a flower too fair
To brave unscathed the winds of Northern skies,
And harsh vicissitude of moist and cold;—
And Arthur Westwood never smiled again;
Or if he did, 'twas in his silent home,

Where his young boy—her boy—her only child
Smiled in his face and prattled at his knee,
And brought before him vividly as life
The fond eyes—the bright cheek—the tender voice—
The breathing spirit of the sainted dead.
Great was the mutual love of sire and son.
To the boy's heart the father was a sage;
In wisdom and in goodness chief of men;—
To the sire's heart the child was love alone,
A love all innocence—half earth—half heaven—
The link uniting both.
So lived the twain
In a fair cottage on the green hill slope,
Embowered 'mid clambering roses. All who passed
Admired the outward grace and inward calm
Of their secluded nest. Around it spread
Elm, beech, and oak, and delicate silver birch,
And all the stateliest trees of English growth;—

And in the spring, the lilac and the ash,
Laburnum and the bridal-vestured haw
Scattered their brightest blooms and richest
balms.

Few were the friends who had the privilege
To enter their abode:—the Vicar first,
The guest most welcome to the widower's hearth,
Of tastes congenial. Both loved Art, and books,
Music, and ever-dear Philosophy—
Such as those know it, who on mountain tops
Look on the little wranglers far adown—
And sun themselves, bare-headed, to the Truth
That beams upon them from the upper sky;—
Philosophy—twin-born with Piety,
That teaches love to God with love to man.
And next Sir Thomas Bellenden; though rare
Were his intrusions on the quiet haunt
Of one so different in his walk of thought,

So lost to all the warfare of the world,
So alien to its pride, its pomp, its care.
Within a mile of Westwood's cottage stood
The Hall of Erlwood, with its towers antique,
Seen through an arching avenue of elms;
The park—a thousand acres—swarmed with deer;
And in its thickest groves a heronry
Gave life to the upper air. Within its bound
Rose many a hollow and rough-rinded oak,
That still put forth its leaflets to the spring,
Though mouldy leases of King Charles's day
Based on tradition, deemed them centuries old
Ere stout King Harry wedded Anne Boleyn,
And from fat Abbeys dispossessed the monks.
Here dwelt Sir Thomas three months in the year;—
Playing the squire—or as he thought, the lord—
A very lord in all things but the rank.
The great Sir Thomas!—If his name were heard

At Lloyd's, the Exchange, in Bank, or Counting House,
In London, Paris, Hamburg, or New York,
The rich and poor all gave it reverence ;
And struggling merchants drew a longer breath,
And sighed to think what tides and seas of wealth
Poured in his coffers, while to theirs, agape,
Fell but the scanty rain or vanishing dew !
And if that name, a scarcely legible scrawl,
Promised to pay a million on demand,
The bankers of all cities in the world
Would count it freely at a million's worth,
And give or take it readily as gold.
The great Sir Thomas ! It were hard to say
On what far oceans never sailed his ships,
Laden with costly ventures, well insured;
In what old channels of perennial trade
His profits did not run; or in what new
He did not tap the founts of enterprise,

And bear away the draught from thirstier lips.
His name was in the mouths of busy men,
Spoken in every language known to Trade;
And never spoken but with such respect
As traders ever feel for those who pay,
And the weak strive to render to the strong.
This prosperous man was in his prime of years,
Had health and strength, the admiring world's applause;—
Two sons to be partakers of his toil,
And raise to nobler heights his tower of wealth;
A daughter, lovely, innocent, rose-ripe—
The joy, the charm, the jewel of his life;
And though the world might sometimes pity him—
That Edith's birth was loss of her who bore—
His love, if e'er he felt it, had expired
When his young wife was taken to the grave,
And dwelt not even in his memory.

All else was his, wealth and the will to spend,
Taste, education, and a liberal hand,
A seat in Parliament, an eloquent tongue,
And power to sway the councils of the realm.
And yet this man, so seeming fortunate,
Pined with a secret sorrow for a toy.
The potent Minister, who ruled the State
And moulded plastic factions to his will,
Scorned with a gentle, but invincible scorn,
The frivolous herd whose service might be bought
With ribands, garters, coronets, and stars:
And when Sir Thomas, as the sole reward
Of vote, and speech, and ready influence,
Asked for a peerage, gave him for reply
A vague half-promise and his blandest smile:
The promise meaningless, if 'twere not false—
The smile another promise, vaguer still.

Hope was his comforter, which comforts all.
Should not his sons in fulness of their hour,
Sit by his side to vote and legislate?
One for the county, ravished at a blow
From the Fitz-Nevilles, Earls of little wealth,
Who jobbed it for the pickings of the State?
The other, destined for the county town,
To win it by his talents, if he could—
If not,—to buy it;—yet not seem to buy?
Then should the Premier at his peril dare
To scorn the claim, made strong by three good votes—
Then should his honours glitter on his brow,
And the calm evening of his sunny day
Glow in a purple splendour to its close.
If this hope failed him, had he not his child,
His lovely Edith, docile as a fawn—
On whom Fitz-Neville, hale, though past his prime,
Looked with the favouring eye of sage resolve,

And deemed her paragon of all her sex—
Kind, good, and beautiful, his soul's true star—
The magnet of his fortunes and his hopes?
Thus, if no peer, he might be sire of peers.
The Earl once scorned him as too lowly born;—
But that was past; and if his Edith chose
To wear the coronet, the day should come
When he, the princely trader, should restore
The tarnished splendour of an ancient house,
And place it high in fortune as in rank.
Much he preferred the peerage for himself—
Due tribute to his greatness. "What," he asked,
"Is this proud Earl, who holds his head so high?—
The tenth descendant of a random boy,
Who studied law and ripened to a judge,
When good Queen Bess sought merit in the mire,
And set it up aloft; and if such boy
Could found a peerage centuries ago,

Why not a merchant of the present time,
With wealth enough to buy a score of Earls?"
Thus did he dream, and calculate, and dream,
And sacrifice the substance of to-day
For empty shadows of a day to come.

And now, 'tis morning, and the month is May;
And through the sunny glades of Erlwood Park
Flits beauty in its fairest human shape.
For Edith loves the country, and has left
London, the Court, the Opera, the Ball,
To have one month with nature and the sun;
And then, again, to high festivity
And all the weary overheated life,
That Fashion loves. Sir Thomas cannot come,
Save from a Saturday till Monday morn,
For the State needs him, or the Minister;—
And are they not the same?—to vote and speak,

And help to save that old and fabulous Ship
Which never sinks; though politicians say
'Tis always sinking when the Whigs are in,
And always foundering when the Whigs are out.

The Westwoods are at home, as is their wont,
The smoke curls bluely from their sylvan bower;
And Arthur angles in the Erlwood brook,
Or carves initials on the beechen rind,
Or carols to himself his own new song,
On "the old, old story"—old as human hearts.
The ancient Abbey is aflare with life
Of servants and retainers. Edith's aunt
Keeps stately house; and Edith's milk-white doe,
Pet of the park, and wild to all but her,
Follows its gentle mistress o'er the lawn,
And nibbles dainties from her coaxing hand.
The flag floats from the turret, that the world—

A little world, but large to villagers—
May learn that great Sir Thomas is at home;
And give him—if it meet him—what he loves;—
Homage, that vassals render to their lords,
And such as common souls, who dwell in cots,
Should yield to those who dwell in palaces,
And give them Christmas coals and good advice.

CANTO II.

UNDER THE TREES.

Under the Trees.

"THE old face," said his father, bending low
Over the easel, where the picture stood—
Queen Berengaria, Cœur de Lion's love,
Girding her lord to fight the Saracen—
"A sweet face—well designed; but are there none
But dark-haired, dark-eyed beauties in the world,
Mere counterfeits of Edith Bellenden,
Like as a rose to rose—or star to star?"
"I strove," said Arthur, "when I planned this work—
My master-piece, my favourite, my best—

To paint another face, another form ;—
But all in vain ; the colours would not blend
Obedient to my will ; the rebel hand,
Knowing the face I loved, broke through my law.
Not Richard's queen, but my queen—my sole star—
Lived on the canvas in my mind's despite.
So, when I painted, half a year ago,
Godiva pleading with Earl Leofric
To stay the plague of taxes, 'twas the same.
I traced fair hair; but, lo! the locks grew dark ;
The blue eyes kindled into passionate black,
And the old face—the dear face—best beloved—
The type and model of mild womanhood,
Looked on me smiling. Do you think it like ?"

" Ay," said his father; " yet it wants the soul
Of childhood, girlhood, womanhood—all mixed,
Which Edith wears, as summer wears its bloom."

" Alas !" said Arthur, " it defies all Art

To paint such living loveliness as hers.
Not one expression, or one soul divine
Has my belovèd—but a thousand souls,
All peering through the splendours of her eyes,
And each, ere you can fix it in your thought,
Sparkling away to one more lustrous still:
Pity, and Charity, and infinite Love,
Sweet Mirth and sweeter Sadness, on her lips,
Follow each other in one throb of Time.
Art would reflect them; but its mirror, dull
As the breeze-ruffled bosom of a lake,
Unresting, insufficient, fails to show
The evanescent multitudinous charms
That live, and change, and die, and live anew
On all the radiant landscape of her mind."

There passed a shadow on the father's face;
His own warm youth and passionate impulses

And bright unreason rose before his mind,
Reviving in his son, with added fires;—
Italian fervour linked with English heart.
"Arthur," he said, "we 'll go to Italy;
A year of travel in the balmy South
Will give me health and spirits which I lack,
And you the opportunity, long sought,
Of study in the paradise of Art.
We 'll go to Florence, Milan, Naples, Rome,
And end with Venice, which I love so well."
"Your will be my mine, father," said the son,
While sudden pallor overspread his cheek,
Then passed, and left it ruddy as before;
"Next week—ay, or to-morrow if you will—
Whate'er you deem shall be the best for you,
That also shall be very best for me."
And the sire smiled the smile he seldom wore—
The silvery radiance of a mind at ease;

And both departed to their several tasks—
The father to his organ 'mid his books,
To form sweet harmonies on minor keys,
Breathing a heavenly joy through human pain;—
To dally with the thronging melodies
That came unbidden to his finger-tips,
Each with a meaning, dying in its birth,
A riddle, and a mystery, and a charm;—
The son to work upon his master-piece—
To imitate the features that he loved,
And fix the well-known heart-bewildering charm
Indelible on canvas. All in vain!—
The mind was with the Nature, not the Art,
And gave no guidance to the listless hand.

"I cannot paint! I cannot read! I'll walk
Forth in the sunny air to Erlwood Park;
And if I meet her, 'twill be well;—if not,

I'll sit and dream beneath the beechen tree
Whereon, three springs ago, I carved her name—
The twin initials intertwined with mine.
Happy conjunction! Lo! with moss o'ergrown,
Green as the leaves above, they flourish still!"

Ah, well he knew the road that she would take,
The road, the by-path, and the hour o' th' day,
Her footfall on the grass, the flowering thorn
That she would stop at, and select a twig
To place upon her bosom, like a gem
Which he, who knew it, on such holy place,
Would gladly purchase at a ruby's price;—
A mile off he descried her glancing robes;
A mile off saw her favourite milk-white doe
Bounding before, or eating from her hand
The tender shoots from branches she had plucked,
Or beech-nuts hoarded ere the winter days.

And nearer as she drew he saw her hair
Freshly dishevelled to the western breeze,
That came and went amid its lucent threads,
As in the strings of the Eolian harp
Passes the night wind; but all noiselessly
Making a silent music in his thought.
Nearer! still nearer! 'tis her tread he hears
Amid the daisies! 'Tis her silken robe
Rustling the wayside grasses! 'Tis her voice,
A palpable music on the morning air!
And lo! she reads;—a book?—No! hush; poor heart,
Thou knowest what she reads, or soon shalt know!

Love's fondest meetings have the fewest words.
Wer't not for silence, or the touch of hands,
Or glance of mingling eyes, how could the soul
Convey its meanings? Language can but hint
Darkly and vaguely what the spirit feels.—

These two were happy. Though no word of love
Came from the lips of either, love was breathed.
Though vows were not imagined, vows were made;
And when at last the one great subject came
To the coy tongue, 'twas but in subterfuge,
Or skilful acting of a delicate play,
Cunningly plotted to an end foreknown.

"I've read thy verse," said Edith as they sat
Together on the sward beneath the tree,
And drew the folded paper from her breast;
"But let the poet read the poet's thought;
'Tis fire of soul that makes the fire of speech,
And songs come freshest from the lips of bards."
He took the paper, blushing. Happy he
Who had not in the moil and wear of life
Dulled the fine spirit in the sensitive blood
Which brought it gushing, flood-like, to his cheeks.

To be so praised by her, and so besought,
Was it not as sweet sunshine to the ground
When all the flowers leap up to kiss the spring;—
Or sight of land to weary mariners
When merry bells peal welcome from the shore?
He blushed for pride, and deeper blushed for shame;
Then taking courage, read the maid the tale
With quivering voice—husky at times for tears;
But with an emphasis, well barbed and aimed,
To reach the guarded fortress of her heart,
And win an entrance through some narrow chink
That guileless Pity had forgot to close.

Geraldine.

I.

She was the daughter of an Earl,
And I the Rector's son;
I loved her more than blessèd life,
And never loved but one.
She took my homage as the rose
Might take the morning dew;
Or a cloud on the eastern rim of Heaven
The daylight gushing new.

II.

She took it as of right divine,
And never thought of me,
No more than the rose, of the morning dew
That bathes it tenderly;
Or the river, of the light of God
That shines on its waters free.

III.

I loved her for herself alone,
And not for rank or gold;—
I was as heedless of her wealth
As a daisy on the wold;—
Or a bird that sings 'mid the hawthorn buds
When forest leaves unfold.

IV.

I loved her for herself alone,
And dreamed in summer eves,
That the Earl, her sire, was a husbandman
Amid his barley sheaves;
And she, a dark-eyed peasant-girl,
As ruddy as the May,
With a smile more rich and golden bright
Than the dawn of a summer's day,
With a voice like the melody of lutes,
And breath like the new-mown hay.

V.

I loved her for herself alone,
And wished that she were poor,
That I might guide her through the world,
A guardian ever sure,

And through all peril and distress,
Conduct her steps aright;
That I might toil for her by day,
And sit in her smile at night:
My toil, a burden cheerily borne,
For her, my heart's delight!

VI.

My soul burst forth in floods of song,
When I thought my love returned,
And proud ambitions filled my heart,
And through my pulses burned.
There was no glory men could snatch
Too vast for my desire,
And all to place upon her brow,
Higher and ever higher;
Till hers was greater than mine own,
And robed her as with fire.

VII.

And when I thought her heart was cold,
And no response was given,
My mournful passion sought relief
From sympathetic Heaven.
And Nature's heart, more kind than hers,
Made answer all day long,
The wild-wind sighed, the rain-cloud wept,
The streams made plaintive song,
And the hoarse sea-billows chanted hymns
Condoling with my wrong.

VIII.

I put my passion into verse,
I built it into rhyme,
And told my hopes, my joys, my fears,
In a tale of olden time:

And read it on the garden seat,
With green boughs overhung,
She by my side so beautiful,
And I so mad and young.

IX.

She praised the bard: she prophesied
A glowing noon of fame,
To him who sang so sweet a song
Of Love's supernal flame;
But could not see, perchance for tears,
And sympathies divine,
The living passion of the verse
That throbbed in every line,
The fable, but the garb of truth—
The love, the sorrow, mine.

X.

I had not courage to declare,
Lest hope should be denied,
The pangs that wrestled with my peace;
"Oh, foolish heart!" I sighed,
"To look so high!—But wherefore not?
Love, like the liberal sun,
Takes no account of human pride,
And scorns or favours none:
Look up, sad heart! thy thoughts are pure,
Thy Heaven may yet be won!"

XI.

One morn,—oh, well-remembered time!—
I met her on the lawn,
With streaming hair, and ripe red lips,
Blithe as Aurora, when she slips
The curtains of the dawn.

From balmy skies of cloudless blue,
Dropped music like the rain,
Ten thousand merry minstrels sang
The one exulting strain :—
"We thank thee, Day, for all thy gifts,
And welcome thee again!"

XII.

It was the bursting of the flower!
She could not choose but hear;
I could not choose, but speak the word;—
"My Geraldine! my dear!"
I never dared, in all I felt,
To name her thus before;—
Unloosened were the founts of speech,
My tongue was mute no more:
And kneeling at her feet, I craved
Permission to adore.

XIII.

She blushed with pleasure and surprise,
And when I grasped her hand,
In dim wild fervour, born of joy,
Too rash for my command,
She did not slay me with a look;—
But from her eyes she threw
Sweet invitations—welcomes sweet—
And greetings old and new;—
I was uplifted from the false—
I soared into the true.

XIV.

In utter dark, devoid of hope,
What evil passions glare,
Like lurid torches waved at night
In foul and misty air.

But in the light of happy love
All evil passions die,
Or fade like tapers when the sun
Rides cloudless in the sky;
They pale, they wane, they disappear—
And in that light was I!

XV.

Till then, I never thought or knew
What charms all Nature bore,
How beautiful were Earth and Heaven;
I never lived before.
But from that moment nobler life
Through all my senses ran;
Deep in the mysteries of Time,
I saw the inner plan,
The holiness of Life and Love,
The dignity of man!

So ran the fable that his fancy drew,
Made for her heart, but woven from his own.
And when the tale was done, and silence fell
So palpable betwixt them, that the grass
Seemed rustling loudly in the startled air,
The green leaves babbling secrets from the boughs,
And the lark's song dropped on them like a weight,
He blushed deep blushes which her cheeks returned;
And she launched meanings from her glistening eyes,
Which his caught up, and flashed exulting back;—
And both were conscious of a new delight,
And breathed the vows that once, and only once,
The heart can form with equal purity.

Dream on, poor children!—dream, and never wake!
In all your raptures—come they thick as flowers
That April tosses to the lap of May,
You 'll never find a rapture like to this!

Dream on, poor children! dream, and fear to wake—
When sorrow looms, the memory of this hour
Shall shine like Hesper through the gathering dark,
And you shall say,—"Once in the days of youth
We had a vision and a glimpse of Heaven!
Once in the morning of our cloudy day
There gushed upon us overpowering joy,
Keen as the lightning flash, and lost as soon!
Let us be grateful,—we have lived and loved,
Tasted ambrosia, feasted with the gods!
Was it a dream?—What more is Cæsar's throne,
Or great Napoleon's, when the end has come?—
Was it a dream?—Could we such dream renew,
And brush away from our enchanted land
The dust and cobwebs of reality,
We'd sleep once more, and never ask to wake."

CANTO III.

FAR AWAY.

Far Away.

SAILING in sunshine through the blue lagoons
Of melancholy Venice, sire and son
Discoursed together in the gondola.
Westwood had letters from his English home
Made dear to memory by a year's long lapse,
And Arthur asked the news.

"News private?—Small:
News public?—Great; though small to you and me.
The Whigs are out, the Tories have come in,
And Parliament's dissolved; and that is all!"

"All? Quite enough!" said Arthur. "Then farewell,

Thou poor Sir Thomas, to thy fondest hopes;
Thou 'lt never be a peer, thou 'st lost thy chance,
For ne'er did Tories make a Whig a Lord!
And I am glad that one obstruction less
Stands betwixt Edith Bellenden and me.
Ah me! I would she were a poor man's child,
That I might win her for the love I bear,
Freed from the vile suspicion of the world,
That money—always money—money-dirt—
Attracts my passion, as the flame the moth.
And is there nothing else?"

"But little more;
The ancient land 's astir with wholesome life,
And all the great athletæ of the time
Gird on their armour. England needs her sons,
And were I young again, as thou art now,
I think I 'd mingle in the clash of arms,
Or clash of tongues—if that 's the better phrase.

Hast never felt such prompting in thy blood?
Lo, the world throbs with mighty impulses,
And the great battle of the Right and Wrong
Calls up the nations: England ever first,
France second, and this Italy, the third
And most unhappy."

"Ay!" replied his son,
"I've had such thoughts; and deemed it sometimes wrong
That I should loiter out my morn of life,
When strong true hearts are needed; yet why not?
My life is in its May, and looks for flowers—
The harvest is not yet."

"'Twould give me joy,"
The sire made answer, "could I see thee fix
Thy heart on some great object seen afar,
To lead thee upwards;—not for sake of fame,
Which thou couldst win, if it deserved thy thought,

But for the sake of action which exalts
And strengthens while it purifies the soul.
My days are wasted; in my yellow leaf
I see no fruit. I've dreamed my life away,
And by the light or shadow of my faults
I see the nobler path which thou shouldst take.
Believe me, Art can poorly satisfy
A soul like thine. It may refine thy tastes,
And be the charm and solace of thine hours,
When wearied for awhile with sterner work;
But action best becomes the noble mind.
Those who have gifts owe something to the State,
And 'tis this debt, so bountifully paid
By English gentlemen, that sends the name
Of England, like a watchword, o'er the world—
Watchword of Liberty and steadfast Law."

"Ay, ay! yet cannot all men serve the State

In the same fashion? He who writes a book
Brimful of noble thoughts, doth he not serve?
And he who sings a song which elevates
The poor man's heart, and makes it throb with joy,
Hath he done nothing? He who carves a stone
Into immortal beauty, is not he
As great and noble as the man who talks
On Opposition benches half the night?
Or on the Treasury benches drones and prates
About his Budget and his Income Tax,
And his five farthings on the pound of tea?
'Tis well, no doubt, to be a Senator,
To make the laws of England, and direct
Great policy to rightful aims and ends,
Or thwart great policy when it is wrong:
But these things are not all. A nation's weal
Cannot be made by Acts of Parliament;
And some must write, some sing, some dance, some paint,

Some teach, some preach, or else the manners fade,
And all the pith of nations shrivels up,
And sapless realms go down to their decay.
My calling's Art; and 't will suffice my soul."

"But," said his father, "Art is but a dream
To those, like thee, who love it for itself
And not for wealth, or as the means to rise
To social eminence of power and fame.
If thou hadst not a sixpence in the world,
Nor I a sixpence to divide with thee,
Art might absorb thee, and thou wouldst excel;
But now 'tis but thy vision and thy toy."

"What else were politics?" the son replied.
"Thou 'dst fill me with ambition; but take care!
I have it in me. If that flame be fed
It may burn higher than thy peace or mine

Would give it room for. But the time's not yet.
I'm but a boy, and hate boy senators;
I'm but a youth, and hate to see a youth
Mount in the pulpit, preaching to old men:
I'm but a student, let me study on."

'Twas three months afterwards: they'd gone to Rome,
Seen all its sights; been saddened day by day
At the great spectacle of Death in Life—
The old Rome dead; the new Rome dying fast,
And most unworthy ever to have lived
On such a grave, and taken such a name:
And they were starting for the balmier south,
To Capri, 'mid the olives and the vines,
When Westwood, sitting sadly by himself,
Read, and re-read a letter just received
From his best friend, and comrade of his heart—
The Vicar.

"My poor boy!" the father said,
"How will he bear it?—how shall I make known
This utter blight of his fast blossoming hopes?
This desecration of the holy shrine
Which he imagined in a woman's heart?
And she has yielded! yielded to her aunt,
Her father, and her brothers—all her kin,
And given her hand to that superb old Earl,
Who loved so well her father's money-bags!
Alas! poor Arthur!—hush! the victim comes!"

Singing a song, exuberant with joy,
Arthur came bounding to his father's door,
His face so fresh—his eyes so bright—his smile
So full of happiness and inward peace,
That Westwood shuddered at the cruelty
Of undeceiving him, and wished some tongue,

Other than his, might tell the bitter tale,
Or any time but *that* might suit the task.

He was unskilful in concealing grief;—
His eyes betrayed him. "Father, what is this?"
Said Arthur, tenderly. He stretched his hand,
And gave his son the letter.

Arthur read
Calmly and silently, without a start
Or motion, save a quivering of the lip,
Scarcely perceptible; then folded up
The document that held such weight of woe,
And gave it back into his father's hands,
And said, with slow, precise, and measured words,
Calm as the motion of a cataract
When it flows shelving to the precipice—
"Had any other name been signed but that,
I should have called him liar to his teeth!

Comfort me not. I cannot bear a word
Except in anger. Call me idiot, fool—
A credulous, gaping, green, and unripe fool—
But do not comfort me. I 'm sick at heart!
Where is the *Times?*—no doubt 'tis blazon'd there,
In the broad columns, 'MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE;—
The Earl Fitz-Neville and his youthful bride,
The daughter of Sir Thomas Bellenden,
Left Erlwood Abbey yesterday, for France,
To pass the honey month.' Oh, fair young bride!
Oh, ardent bridegroom—fifty years of age,
A little older—five years at the least
Than the bride's father. Happy—happy Earl!"
And he laughed wildly at the torturing thought,
And clenched his hand and smote it on his brow.

His father pressed his hand, but spake no word;
And the son leaned his head on that broad breast,

Paternal, warm; and, after little space,
Sobbed on it like a child. "Forgive," he said,
"This burst of grief, for never—never more
In any sorrow will I weep again!
And let her names—her old one and her new—
Never again be breathed between us two."

They went to Naples, thence to Sicily,
And thence to Athens. Arthur could not rest.
He thought he'd like to row upon the Nile,
And see the Pyramids; and so they went,
And rowed upon the Nile, and thought it dull;
And saw the Pyramids, and thought them small.
And next they tried the Desert—what of that?
It *was* a desert;—but in their degree,
Pall Mall, the Boulevards, and the Grand Canal,
Are they not deserts also, if the heart
Find not another heart in all their scope

To change a feeling with? So back they turned,
And came to Pera and the Golden Horn,
Where Arthur fumed and fretted at the Turks,
And mourned the fate of such a lovely land,
Encumbered by such people.
In one week,
Tired of the Turks, and all that Turkey held,
The yielding father and the impetuous son
Debated to which spot of all the world
They next should travel. "Back to Italy?"
"Ay, that were well," said Arthur; "for I fear
This ceaseless whirl, that whirls me out of self,
May do thee mischief. Let us rest awhile
In some decaying city of the Po,
In Mantua or in Padua: yet, alas!
I fancy in such quietude as that
The burning rust would eat into my heart,
And leave thee childless. Let us try the Alps,

And in the gorgeous Bernese Oberland
Dwell in the valleys, 'mid the simple folk,
Where thou canst be at rest, and I can climb
Great Monte Rosa and the Wetterhorn,
Or Jungfrau; scale high rocks, and tread on snow
Where human footsteps never trod before.
I have a spirit in me that hard work
And vigorous exercise alone can quell.
Wer 't not for thee, who lovest me so much,
I 'd join some enterprize to trace the Nile,
Lay bare the roots of Niger, or explore
Australia's inner lakes of salt and sand—
Anything desperate!"

"Has Art no more
Its ancient charm to fill thee," said his sire,
"With high resolve of something to be done?"

"I should be painting Ediths evermore!"—
He answered, bitterly. "The very brush

Rebels against me when I take it up,
And plagues me with a Countess. Art grows dull,
Since she grew false. Could I invade, besiege,
And storm a borough by the dint of tongue,
I 'd be well pleased to sit in Parliament.
If Love be stale, Ambition's ever fresh!
So, if agreed, we 'll turn our footsteps back
To murky London; there, perchance, I 'll find
Something or other, huge or strong enough
To lay the constant devil that gnaws my heart."
"Our English politics want stirring up;
They need the infusion of some younger blood;"
Replied his father. "Trade and trading things
Befit a trading nation such as ours;
But Trade;—for ever Trade and dull Maynooth,
Where Bigot fights with Bigot;—and sometimes
An episode about the Sabbath day,
When some men think it shame to wear a smile,

And criminal to roam into the fields
And breathe the breath of Heaven, depress the mind
Of legislation. Give us something more
To talk about than these; let us become
More tolerant, more wise and loftier-souled,
That in the steady tramp and march of Time
Our honest England may preserve her place
In the great commonwealth of Christian realms,
The oldest, best, and bravest of them all,
And not to be outstripped in any race
Of Wealth, or Power, or Art, or Enterprize,
Or great Dominion, or true Liberty,
By friend or foe. 'Fore heaven, I often think,
I'll try, myself!"

"And why not?" said his son,
"Thou'rt under fifty; in thy manhood's prime.

The Earl Fitz-Neville, wed the other day,
Is three years older. Better thou than I."

"Nay!" said the father, "I have formed my life,
I'm but a dreamer, and must live on dreams.
I could not tolerate the long debate;
I could not sit till three o'clock at morn,
To hear a crass, dull, awkward Minister
Wear out his subject, and my patience too.
My youthful elasticity is gone;—
No! give me books and music, and fresh air.
If the book tire, I'll lay it on the shelf,
Or taste its beauties only. If the strain
That once delighted me have lost its charm,
I'll close the instrument and take a walk.
And if all fail to while the weary time—
Thanks to all-gracious and beneficent Heaven—
I can lie down upon my quiet bed

And go to sleep. But thou, my son, art young,
And hast no habits long and fully formed;
Go thou to Parliament, and thou 'lt succeed."

They sailed again to westward, taking ship
For Syra, Malta, Naples and Leghorn—
To pass a month in Florence. Luckless thought!
They had not been in Florence but a day,
When Arthur, strolling, as the tourist will,
Into the Duomo, met—'twas face to face,
And not to be avoided, or denied—
The Earl Fitz-Neville, and a troop of friends;
And back a pace or two—amid her maids—
Edith, the Countess. Through the solemn aisles,
Startling the organist amid his fugues,
There rang a cry of pain—as glance met glance!
He saw the lovely face—the dark deep eyes—
And darted from the presence, lest its power

Should smite him into Folly, with Despair,
And fled the place, unconscious of the cry
Wrung from her heart by terror of his eyes.

By the next evening he was far away,
At Genoa; thence onward to Marseilles,
And thence to Paris, with his bursting heart,
And all its griefs reopened to the day.

Paris—the bright, the fair, the libertine,
Youthful in beauty, old in wickedness;—
Paris, the ancient home of generous men,
And now the sink of jobbers, gamblers, knaves;—
Ruled by a master-hand, whose iron grip
Slays disobedience, but forgives all else—
Vice, meanness, crime, degeneracy and sloth
Detained them for awhile. The city swarmed
With swaggering captains and their stunted men,

Each with his marshal's visionary staff
Safe in his knapsack, and with head uplift
Saucily in the path; for had they not
Within short space, strangled, against all law,
A young Republic? slain it in the streets,
And dragged its bleeding body through the mire;
And set an armed Empire in its place,
Governed by beat of drum and bayonet thrust—
A vulgar, slavish, gross and carnal thing,
Without a soul;—unless the bees have souls?
These yield a blind obedience to their chief,
And feed and swaddle it, and make it fat,
And toil and moil, until th' appointed hour
When in hot swoop they fall upon the drones,
And kill the fluttering fathers of the State;
Or, may be, choose another Sovereign
To gorge and pamper as they did the last.
So Arthur deemed, when musing in the streets,

That, in like manner, act these bees of France,
Swarming from fauxbourgs at the tocsin's peal—
Ruthless and bloody while the fit is on,
And patient drudges when the fit wears off.

Here Arthur strove to study humankind,
But made small progress; how could he explain
The tame endurance of a land like this?
'Twas order? So is death. 'Twas peace? 'Twas rest?
He had seen rest in Nubia;—and in graves;—
And 'mid the crumbling fanes of Ephesus
There was a rotten and unwholesome peace,
But nobler peace than this, as Nature's work—
And not the base contrivance of a man.

He went to theatres, and there he saw
"Daughters of marble"—brothels on the stage.
He went to cafés;—there 'twas constant smoke;
And constant dominoes, and constant spies.

He went to churches, but he saw no men—
Or only passing strangers like himself,
Who came to look at pictures and stained glass,
Or hear the organ, and the full-voiced priests
Chanting *Te Deums* on a festal morn.

The pastime tired at last, "What 's France to me?"
He said and sighed, "Let 's seek that fresher land;—
Our own land, where a public soul remains
To guide the public body! Let us go—
For I am weary of the beat of drum—
The dust of troops—the slavery and the slaves;—
And long to rush into the open air
Out of this fever—to the land of Health;—
To tread the sward of Freedom, and inhale
The fresh, pure atmosphere that freemen love."

CANTO IV.

SORROW.

Sorrow.

THE Lord Fitz-Neville had one passionate love—
The love of hunting; love that nurtures hope
In the mild bosoms of presumptive heirs;
And most intensely when in life's decline
The staid possessor of some good estate
Thinks it befitting he should wed a girl.
So Lord Fitz-Neville hunted; had good sport;
Bought many horses with my lady's dower;
Went on the turf, and kept a racing stud;

And gave the county three new packs of hounds.
But being vexed one day, and thinking more
Of his vexation and its secret cause
Than of the horse he rode—a quiet beast—
The creature stumbled, and my lord was thrown
Over the hedge into a stony field,
And lay insensible. They took him home,
And plied the electric wire for speedy help,
And brought physicians from the capital,
Who came express, by horses and by steam,
And issued bulletins from day to day,
Signed by three magnates of the healing art,
To tell how much—or little—hope there was.

Three weeks he lay, nor knew the face of man,
Nor any kindness that was offered him,
Nor his wife's touch upon his fevered brow,
Nor any word of hope; and then he died.

Great was the sorrow, for my lord was good;
A model magistrate, an upright man,
An English gentleman, wed but six months,
And sent untimely to his last account,
In the ripe autumn of his vigorous days.
Great was the sympathy; and great, perchance,
The wonder of the garrulous peasantry
In hamlets, farms, and homesteads round about,
Mouthed by old gaffers at the alehouse porch,
And chattered o'er their tea by pitying wives
And grandams skilful in such human lore;
If my lord's brother were indeed a Lord,
And had an earldom and a fair estate
To leave the eldest of his five tall sons;
Or, whether in the ripening growth of Time
A new-born heir would crush their nascent hopes,
And make Sir Thomas what he pined to be,
The happy grandsire of a race of peers?

Time came and went; and ere a year had passed
The new Fitz-Nevilles, safe and well-assured,
Dwelt in the ancient seat; and Edith doffed
The formal weeds that blazon widowhood,
And set a label on a woman's grief,
And robed herself in sensible attire—
One of the common world through which she moved;
And great Sir Thomas, gathering strength anew
From the approaching advent of the Whigs;
(The Tories having wrecked the ship of state,
Or maybe, saved it, as the Whigs declared,
By being beaten); looked about and saw
Another chance of honours long desired,
Intensely coveted, and well-nigh clutched.
He was the county member, well secured:
His eldest son, at sore expense, had wrenched
The obstinate borough from the Tory grasp,
And both were voters; loyal, staunch, and true,

Pairing for Whigs whenever Whigs were right,
Voting for Whigs whenever Whigs were wrong,
The bright exemplars of all party men.
And were not such high principles and votes
Worth the small purchase of a barony?
He thought, he dreamed, he hoped, he knew they were.
He felt the coronet upon his brow;
Unseen of others—palpable to him—
A vision, bordering on reality.

And Edith roamed once more in Erlwood Park,
And read her book, and fed her milk-white fawn,
As if she still were Edith Bellenden;
And two long years were but a morning dream,
Scared into nothing by the dawn of day.

Oh, she was beautiful beyond belief!
More beautiful than when a thoughtless girl

She knew no sorrow and imagined none,
Save in the melting pages of Romance ;—
More beautiful than when beneath the boughs
She took the offering of a guileless heart,
Herself as guileless then ;—more beautiful
By all the added loveliness of thought,
And the deep sorrow hidden in her soul,
Which had refined and chastened her since then,
She seemed too fair for Earth, too sad for Heaven.

And no one knew her anguish but herself ;—
For she had given her hand without her heart,
After great struggle—after many tears—
Because she reckoned filial duty much ;
Herself, as nothing. She had sold her peace
For empty title, which she valued not ;
And, like the Patriarch's son, had lain her down,
Moaning and helpless, but obedient still,

On the grim altar which her sire had built
To offer up his human sacrifice
To his false gods of Vanity and Pride.

She told her lord the truth before she wed,
And afterwards, with many a blinding tear.
The easy Earl disliked all sentiment;
And he had taken her without her heart;
Her, and her money; and been good and kind,
And treated her with gentle courtesies,
Until she owned in silence and remorse,
And secret confidence,—if such it be,
When Conscience is the only confidant,—
That had he been her brother, or her sire,
Or any other than her wedded lord,
She could have weighed his kindness and respect,
And balanced them with friendship and esteem.
But he was dead;—and 'twas a sin no more

To think of Arthur Westwood, so beloved,
So distant, so estranged, so lost to her;
Far on the outer verge of the abyss
Which she had dug beneath their yearning feet;—
Hereafter doomed to walk on different paths;—
No more to tread the same—ah, never more!

The cottage of the Westwoods was for sale,
With all its furniture, except the books.
She bought it, through her agent, in his name;
And her dull sire, who never dreamed of hearts,
Or anything but money, rank, and power,
Could never fathom why she wasted gold
On such a purchase. Here she often went
And sat upon the chairs where he had sat,
And saw his name inscribed upon the wall,
Entwined in hers, with true-love knots between.
From the same window out of which he 'd gazed

Upon the lovely landscape spread below
She looked, and found a pleasure in the sight.
And when the blackbird in the hawthorn grove
Sang joyous, said she to herself, "That song
Pleased him in other days, and pleases me."
Amid the ivy clustering to the roof
Darted the swallows; he had watched their flight
In melancholy noons, and so would she.
To the green sward beneath the window-sill
A frequent visitor, for charity,
Came the bold robin; and she gave the dole
To the blithe beggar with the glittering eye,
Because he gave it,—steward of his alms.
She trimmed the rose-trees in the garden-walk,
Because he trimmed them in the happy days
When he believed in her, and in himself.
She nurtured sorrow by a thousand arts,

And fed it with a thousand sympathies,
And was repaid, because she thought of him.

Time wore, and she had suitors at her feet.
The Curate fresh from Oxford, with white hands,
White face, white brow, white neckcloth and white teeth,
But with a batch of hazy principles,
Scarlet as Rome; whose talk was evermore
Of crosses, candlesticks and papal gear;
Laid formal siege and battery to her heart.
He thundered at her gates with piety,
Or strove to sap the fortress with soft words,
And would not be denied or robbed of hope;—
For he was rich in bountiful conceit
And thought no woman could resist a tongue
So oily, glib and specious as his own.
And a smooth cousin of the Earl deceased,
A captain in the Guards, with whiskers huge,

Who could not speak without a burst of slang,
And smoked from morn's first dawn till evening's close,
And seemed to have no aim or end of life
But to consume tobacco—thought one day,
Between two whiffs—while shaving—that he'd make
Great sacrifice, and give himself away.
That Edith would accept him, could he doubt?
But she refused him, and he answered "Haw!"
And smoked no longer for a round half-hour.
And then recovering consciousness and peace,
He smoked again as briskly as before,
And thought, betwixt two other long-drawn whiffs,
What an escape he'd had from slavery.
To apron-strings; and then said "Haw!" again,
Half vexed, half satisfied, and sore perplexed;
But still in confidence to his sweet self.

And there were other suitors;—human flies,
That ever drone and buzz at honey-pots,

With busy wing—lank legs—and suckers dry
For want of golden sweets—that long to light
Upon the paths of widows richly dower'd,
And settle there;—insatiate as wasps
That dig their feelers into luscious pears,
Or burrow into peach and apricot.
But she pass'd through them, as the sunny beam
On which the midges dance, strikes through the crowd
Of little, nimble, pestilential things
That revel in its light, and knew them not.

And there came news to Arthur far away,
In the great whirl and Maelstrom of the town,
Of all that Edith suffered for his sake,
The life she led, the offers she refused,
And all the gradual blighting of her days.
But he was smitten with a fearful plague.
The love he thought she scorned, had grown to hate;—

The hate as bitter as the love was true.
And in the struggle he essayed to drown
The fierce remembrance both of hate and love.
He lived a life of lightning—not of light—
Rapid and brilliant, but most deadly sad:
A constant battle with one haunting thought
That stared him in the face, and all night long
Lay watchful on the pillow where he moaned,
Or through his curtains, with an angel's face,
Peered in the lengthening vigils of the night,
Stabbing him through the eyes, into the brain,
With thoughts empoisoned. Whither could he fly?
Where was his Lethe? Travel was too slow,
And politics too dull, and art too tame,
And battle—which he thought of—too unjust
To give him the sublime forgetfulness
Of self and personal sorrow that he craved.
Oh, whither, whither should he turn for peace?

In what sweet fountain should he bathe his heart,
To clear it from that black and burning drop
Of passionate gall? His friend, and father's friend,
The Vicar, came from Erlwood's quiet groves
To give him comfort; but he came in vain.
A kindly man, a wise philosopher,
A pastor most benign, his threefold pow'r
Fell idly on that proud and smitten heart,
Which in the waywardness of young desire
Had looked for heavenly rapture on the earth,
And could not, for its wounds, look up to Heaven.
He scorned philosophy, that could not cure
An evil deep as his. He did not scorn
Religion and its teachings; but his soul,
Leaning on earth as youthful souls will lean,
Looked downwards, and not up, and could not see
The starlight peering through the nether gloom.
His love had been too human and too fond,

And was too closely riveted with hate,
Or what he deemed was hate—though 'twas but love
Stung into frenzy—to be linked with Heaven.
And so he listened to the soothing hopes
The pious preacher poured into his mind,
And was not soothed: and so, from day to day
Feeding fierce thoughts in fruitful solitude,
He grew enamoured of his own despair,
And played with it, and nursed it, like a toy.
And Arthur's father, pitying much his son,
Ceased to console. "Time's homœopathy
Will bring him solace: lightnings cannot flash
On the dark skies for ever. Rains must fall
When clouds are heavy, but the clouds must pass;
And a new love, more mighty than the first,
Bursting upon him like the blooms of spring,
Shall fill his being with a new delight

That shall efface remembrance of old days.
Let him alone. The heart that has no grief
Is but a dull and barren stone at best—
A quiet, happy, and unfeeling stone;
And Sorrow ripens Life to glorious deeds
That might have languished in the nothingness
Of too much ease. The soil where grief is grown
Is fruitful soil for joy; and have not I
Struggled with sorrow for philosophy,
And gained the laurel branch and victor's crown?
And so shall he: I see it in his eyes,
And trace it in the words of his despair."

Thus Westwood argued with his anxious heart,
And gathered for himself the wayside flowers
Of comfort he could feel, but not bestow;
Then hied him to his music with new zeal,
To work upon a cherished theory,

And draw the soul of heavenly harmony
From the entranced body—dumb—not dead,
Of ancient music, such as Plato heard;
Or that which charmed divine Pythagoras,
Lost to the moderns; but of which, perchance,
He in his happiest hour had found the key.

There came one day a missive to his club
From Thomas Bellenden, the eldest son
Of great Sir Thomas, begging him to grant
Five minutes' interview on urgent need.
The young man came; and after little space,
Sufficient for the simple tale he told—
Both drove together fast as steeds could run
To high Tybûrnia, where Sir Thomas kept
State like an earl;—oh, miserable man,
That could not be an earl, though richer far
Than any brace of earls in all the land!

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And there they saw, in mild autumnal grace,
Her white hair parted on her open brow,
Good Mistress Bellenden, the knight's best friend,
Sister—and careful matron of his home.
She, sadly smiling, without waste of words,
Opened her heart; "Is it not sad," she said,
"That a young life, most innocent and pure,
Should waste, and be consumed, and fade away,
When one kind word might lift it into hope,
And hope to healing? Edith Bellenden—
She loves the old name better than the new—
Dies without malady, save that which lurks
Insidious in the secret of her heart.
She dies for Love. There was a time, my friend,
When I, and you, perchance, with thoughtless smile
Might have denied the power of Love to kill,
Or talked incredulous of broken hearts:
But we are wiser now; or else, should be.

Edith, the lovely child, so good, so true,
The docile victim of her father's pride,
Dies for the love of Arthur. Tell him so.
Tell him, moreover, that she never loved,
With the remotest shadow of a thought,
Other than him: and that, in few short weeks,
That pure, unsullied life will bloom in Heaven
Unless he can retain it on the earth
By one kind word or look. She knows not this;
And she might die of shame were she to learn
That I became so forward in her cause,
And bared her weakness to the gaze of one
Who might, in haughtiness of poor revenge,
Exult to see it—and respond with scorn.
Tell him the truth; and let his heart decide
On its own action: mine hath done its part,
And yours will aid it, or I cannot read
The soul that glistens in your sorrowing eyes."

"If Arthur be like me," the father said,
Taking the gentle speaker by both hands,
"This news will fill him with a grievous joy;
And if her life depend upon his smile,
Death shall repent, and drop his pitying hand,
And spare the blossoming tree. But who can tell
How wild and wicked is a young man's heart?
And this boy's heart hath hot Italian blood
That chafes at Reason when it braves his will.
But he is generous, and he loved this girl
With all the fervour of his mother's clime,
And all the truth of honourable souls.
And if that love remain—ay, if one spark
Of that great fire be smouldering in him still,
It may revive. I 'll find him ere an hour,
And learn if there be healing in his words.
Meantime, dear lady, comfort and console
The perishing flower. Breathe hope into her mind,

For Hope is life. Deceive her, if thou wilt,
With hopes unfounded—anything for life.
And trust to me, and God's great charity,
And Love, the master Spirit of the world,
That Hope and Love shall purify themselves,
And dwell together. Sister! fare thee well!"

CANTO V

HOPE.

Hope.

OPEN! wide open—to the setting sun
That poured its slant beams on the chequered floor
Through tangled fretwork of the clambering vine;—
Open—wide open to the evening breeze,
That blew balm-laden from the bounteous West,
Stood Edith's lattice. There she loved to sit
To watch the darkness creeping on the day,
And dream sad homilies of life and love
Fading, or faded,—like the summer morn
That shone so beautiful and passed so soon.

On her white garments, and her pale white hands,
The rose-red lustre of the evening fell,
As on the marble statue of a saint
Falls crimson splendour through cathedral aisles,
And clad her with a glory caught from Heaven.
Beside her sat a maiden fair as she,
Yet not so lovely; not a shadow of cloud
Dwelt on the May-day of that happy face,
Which had been fairer had a grief been there,
And left its delicate tracery in her eyes,
Or its faint echo on her silvery tongue.

"Sing to me, Rose—my Rose-bud," Edith said;
"Sweet singers find no labour in their song,
But sing for pure delight, as lark or thrush;
And thou art like them in luxurious ease
Of opulent melody, that from thy throat
Pours, as from laden clouds the summer rain.

Thy song nor tires thyself nor listeners :
Sing then, to please me, any English song
That has a heart in it—of joy or grief.
There's something in thy voice that floats my soul
Nautilus-like upon a sunny sea,
The waves beneath me—the blue skies above.
Sing to me, Rose, and waft me from myself,
And let me travel over boundless deeps
To golden slopes and bowery isles of song."

Rose Trevor, friend and comrade of her youth,
The dear companion of her childish days,
Who left the calm seclusion of her home
To watch and tend her in sore malady,
Born of the mind, the worst that flesh can feel,
Pressed her pale hands in hers, and smiling sang.

Song.

How many thoughts I give thee!
Come hither on the grass,
And if thou'lt count unfailing
The green blades as we pass:
Or the leaves that sigh and tremble
To the sweet wind of the west,
Or the ripples of the river,
Or the sunbeams on its breast,
I'll count the thoughts I give thee,
My beautiful, my best!

How many joys I owe thee!
Come sit where seas run high,
And count the heaving billows
That break on the shore and die—
Or the grains of sand they fondle,
When the storms are overblown,
Or the pearls in the deep sea caverns,
Or the stars in the milky zone,
And I'll count the joys I owe thee,
My beautiful, my own!

And how much love I proffer!
Come scoop the ocean dry,
Or weigh in thy tiny balance
The star-ships of the sky;
Or twine around thy fingers
The sunlight streaming wide,
Or fold it in thy bosom,
While the world is dark beside;
And I'll tell how much I love thee,
My beautiful, my bride!

"I thought," said Edith, when the song had ceased,
"I heard a sigh, and then a stir of leaves,
As if some stranger in the garden walk
Had lurked to listen;—prithee, look and see!"

The fair face glimmered through the clustering vine,
Like sunlight streaming through the woods of June,
And the soft voice made answer, "Fancied sigh,
And fancied stranger, or perchance a bird
Amid the ivy at the cottage door."

"Forgive the fancy then, my Rose, my love;
And sing again,—but sing to me no more
Such lilt of joy, to waken in my soul
The sad remembrance of departed time,
Linked with the name of him whose thought it spoke,
When from his heart he poured it upon mine.
Gay music makes me sad, so, prithee, Rose,
Sing me a doleful, melancholy song
Such as Ophelia, crazed and strewing flowers,
Sings in the play. If pleasure make me weep,
Sorrow, perchance, may soothe me into smiles."

Again the singer, with her mellow voice,
Ripe, round, and full, and careful of the words,
As every singer, worthy of the name,
Should strive to be—sang as her friend desired.

Song.

How could I tell that death was there?
I shot mine arrow in the air,
And knew not of the bonnie bird
Singing aloft, unseen, unheard,
Oh, idle aim!
Oh, sorrow and shame!
O arrow, that did my heart the wrong!
It slew the bird, it hushed the song!

How could I tell its fatal power?
I breathed a word in Beauty's Bower,
And knew not, most unhappy boy,
What charm was in it to destroy;
Oh, idle breath!
Oh, shaft of death!
Oh, fatal word which I deplore,
It slew my peace for evermore!

"It is *not* fancy, or my senses fail,"
Said Edith, starting as the song expired

In lingering whispers on the placid air;
"Hark to the footfall, and the crash of boughs!"

Rose Trevor looked again, and thought she saw,
A rapid shadow flash across the lawn;
But hid the truth, as nothing in itself,
Or only potent to disturb a brain,
Made sensitive by sorrow; and sat down,
The two pale hands in hers, and calmly said,
"Edith! 'twas but a fancy as before—
There are no listeners but thy heart, dear love:
And if there were, the song that pleases thee
Might well attract thy grooms. I'll sing no more.
For, lo! the sun has sunk into the west
And the night air grows chilly." Then she rose
And shut the lattice; and with kiss as pure
As infant to an infant, went her way
To her own chamber with a fond "good night."

And Edith thanked her with beseeching eyes,
And sought the couch where wakeful dreams were guests,
And sleep, the comforter, was coy to come.

That night was morning dawn of happiness
To one unhappy. All night long he strayed,
Sleepless, around the outer avenues,
And watched the light, to him a cynosure,
That glimmered from her chamber through the dark,
And said within himself, "When comes the day—
I will confess the evil I have thought,
And sue for pardon; I'll declare my love,
The love I strove to wrench from out my heart,
The love immortal that refused to die,
Though I decreed it daily to the death."

But when the morning came his spirit failed,

And idly dallying with his new-born hopes—
The later blossoms of a blighted life—
Deferred fruition, lest a second blight
Should nip them, also, ere the harvest time.
Night after night he wandered silently
Through the old haunts—to happy childhood dear—
Of his own cottage, doubly his, now hers,
And saw the lonely taper in her room,
A love-star, whose love-secret no one knew
Except himself; and watched it until morn
With fairer radiance dispossessed its beam,
And sent him back again to common life,
Nerved for all struggles, strong again in hope,
With heart unburthened, and with head erect,
And eyes that took a pleasure in the light
And drooped no longer in the dark forlorn.

And there came news to Edith in her bower

Of him that roamed without; of Arthur's self.
Love-guided to her solitary home,
Yet lacking heart to look upon her face
And words to breathe, what he desired to speak,
And she to hear. Oh, power of blessèd Hope!
Oh, sovran balsam! Best medicament!
Sweet as the breath of Spring to opening flowers,
Warm as the sunshine to the bursting buds,
And potent as the moon on laggard tides!
It brought new lustre to her eloquent eyes,
And to her cheeks the crimson they had lost,
And to her lips the smile they 'd ceased to wear
Since the dark day when at her sire's command
She gave to "duty" what was love's alone,
And laid her heart upon a funeral pyre
With filial piety and hidden tears.

But Joy and Sorrow are like Day and Night,

Twin-born of Time, who walk together still,
Inseparable, the substance and the shade;
For if one smiles and loads the heart with gifts,
The other frowns and takes the gifts away.
One scatters glory, wealth, dominion, power,
The other, if she leave the toys intact,
Will take away a child, or blessed health,
Or heavenly reason, dearest boon of all.
Oh, traitors both, and not to be believed!
Cheats that belie the promises they make,
And balance life with death; yet friendly still,—
For if the heart were drunk with constant joy
Madness might crown himself anointed King,
And dispossess the old inheritor;
And Sorrow, were she Queen too absolute,
Might lose her throne to one more fierce than she,
And yield her broken sceptre to Despair.
Great are the balances of Day and Night,

Of Summer and of Winter—Up and Down;
Great are the balances of Joy and Grief.
Almighty Power decreed their twofold life;
Almighty Love maintains their unison.

And so, when Edith, drinking life anew
From Hope's pure atmosphere that robed the world,
Saw through its golden haze the star of love
That seemed to have set and vanished from the sky,
But now rose clear again, and shot afar
Radiance divine;—she thought that joy once more
Might dwell beside her as in olden days:
But dreamed not of the spectral balances
That equalize the fortunes of mankind,
Nor saw that Sorrow in a new disguise
Would steal invidious on her upward path
And break her flowers and dull her brightening day.

In the upper skies of Trade, hoarse thunders rolled.
The demigods of Commerce shook their beards
And spake their sore amaze, that one of them,
The Lucifer, amid their sinless choir,
Should fall from Credit, that imperial seat,
And carry with him in his downward flight
To the deep Hades and the hopeless dark
Of Bankruptcy and Ruin, such a rout
Of minor potentates and satellites
Who shared his glory once, and now his shame.
Through Bank, Exchange, and Bourse, the rumour sped
And gathered strength and clearness as it grew,
That the great House, the overshadowing House,
The House of Bellenden—renowned and high,
And never doubted for a hundred years,
Shook at its very basement. Envious men,
O'erladen with the news, relieved their souls
By noising it abroad. Alas, too true!

It was not built upon the solid rock
Of prudent Trade, but on the shifting sands,
The treacherous quagmires, and the rotten bogs
Of desperate Speculation, and must fall
With crash to startle and confound the world.
Even as they spake, the gaping multitude
Became aware that ruin was at hand.
High in the air rose clouds of flying dust,
Low through the ground a rumbling noise was heard,
As of convulsion in the nether depths;
And, lo! the fabric tottered—shivered—broke—
And lay as prostrate as Lisboa's towers
When earthquake smote them—shapeless, worthless, nought;
And men grew pale, and whispered each to each,
"Who is secure? if House like this can fall,
Whom shall we trust? The world is old and sick,
And Trade 's a rottenness, and Truth a lie."

Of all that mighty wealth there scarce remained
Pittance enough to pay the labourers
Who scraped the ruined heap for waifs and strays.
Of all that power, whose name was like the blast
Of martial trump and clarion in the strife,
To stir the hearts of enterprising men,
Nothing was left; its very shadow passed,
And name and fame were idle as a breath
Spoke in a desert centuries ago;
Or, ere a month had passed, became the scoff
Of portly men whose money was their god,
Whose own soap-bubbles glittered to the sun,
Ready to burst, but had not yet collapsed,
And vanished into nothingness, like this.
And "great Sir Thomas"—mockery of words!
To call him great whose greatness was as dead
As last year's blossoms, or its winter wind—
Endeavoured with strong heart and stronger will

To show new greatness in adversity;
To lift his head and look upon the world
With clear eye unabashed, and say—still proud—
"Make me a beggar—do your best, or worst—
Take from me all things—money, houses, lands,
Power, station, splendour—everything you will!
I can take nothing with me to the tomb,
Nor leave to any one who follows me
Aught but my honour. If you leave me that,
I will go down into the grave in peace,
Nor wish to live, a pauper in the land,
A crawling, pitiful, and abject thing—
A worse than Lazarus, who ne'er was rich,
And never fell from such a height as mine."

But the strong effort cost him more than life.
The inner conflict was too fierce to bear.
The wounded vanity, the trampled pride,
The outraged dignity, the sense of shame,

The keen regret for fair dominion lost
Over men's homage, and their flattering tongues;
The love of money that survived the wreck
Of money's self, and pomp that money brings;
All warred together, in a worldly mind
That had no trust except in worldly things,
And no belief in goodness, man's or God's;
Till the fine tendrils of the brain were snapped,
And the mind's music and true harmony
Jarred into hopeless discord, or was dumb.
And great Sir Thomas, little to the world,
Was great as ever in his own conceit,
And fondly clutched imaginary gold,
And counted it, and hugged it to his heart;
Harangued imaginary Parliaments,
And put upon his brow ideal crowns,
And sent to sea imaginary ships
Freighted with dreamy ventures, huge enough,

If dreams were facts, to build his house anew,
With tenfold strength to overawe mankind.
And Arthur, much amazed, reproached himself
For joy that came unbidden, when he heard
The great calamity. "Oh, wayward heart,
Thou treacherous, bitter, black, and guilty thing!
Why art thou glad that grief like this hath come
On her and on her father? Why shouldst thou
Take pleasure in disaster like to this?
And yet thou 'rt glad; and I am glad, my heart—
Not for affliction—would it had not come!
Not for the sorrow; for if I could heal
Or lessen, or remove it, blest were I.
But all thy motives are mine own, dear heart,
And I can see thy secrets clear as noon;
Thou canst not cheat me; canst not hide one spring
Of all that moves thee; and thy joys, like mine,
Flow from a fountain of perennial love

That never failed, although it seemed to fail.
For are we not made free? And can we not
Without reproach or slander of the world—
Without suspicion that vile dross and gold
Inspire our homage, haste to Edith's bower,
And lay our fortune, life, and love, and hope,
As offerings at her feet? We 'll go, my heart!
For she is sick and needs a comforter;
Weak and requires support; distressed and sad,
While I have words of solace on my lips,
Panting for utterance; poor, while I am rich—
Ay, doubly, trebly rich! Oh, happy day,
When I can woo her for herself alone!
And prove to her, as to my nobler self,
That dearer in her poverty and grief
Is Edith Bellenden to him she scorned,
Than Edith Bellenden, in blaze of wealth,
And bloom of beauty. Heart! thine hour has come."

CANTO VI.

HAPPINESS.

Happiness.

LINGER! oh, linger! ye delicious hours!
The stormful March—the tearful April's gone—
And life's fresh May, with all its buds and blooms,
Its balmy odours, and ambrosial skies,
Smiles on two loving hearts, dissevered long.
Linger, oh, linger! ye delicious days,
That hopes and joys may blossom like the flowers,
That happy thoughts may sparkle like the stars,
And peace of mind, like the o'erarching sky,
Shine forth unclouded, dropping heavenly dews!

Linger, oh, linger! Love is in its noon;
Grief is forgotten; pain hath passed away;
And Memory, if her mournful voice be heard,
Whispers in music; if her shadow fall,
'Tis but to show how glorious is the light.
Linger, oh, linger! Yestermorn were wed
Arthur and Edith. Be it thine, O Time,
To pay them recompense for sorrow past.
Time—such as thou—is essence of all Time,
And one fair day may carry in its breast
The joy of centuries. They suffered long;—
Let them be happy! And if grief must come
Once more upon them, as it comes to all,
Fill up the interval with pure delights;
Make every minute fruitful; shower them down
Blessings and pleasures in each tick o' th' clock
And balance of thy ceaseless pendulum,
Dispensing grief and joy to all who live.

Thou canst not stay thy course; but Love and Truth
Can make thy minutes bountiful as years,
And turn the years to ages. Love is wed;
And Truth was at the bridal in both hearts,
And smiles from mutual eyes and mingling lips.

And Arthur's sire is in his ancient home,
New fitted for his ease by Edith's care;
Amid his books, his music, and his plants,
As mildly happy as in former days;
And builds new melodies, and studies hard
To ravish from the undivulging past
The buried secret of the songs of Greece,
That still escapes him, and still seems to come.

Quietly flows the streamlet of his life;
And, having much of Love and little Hate,
He takes to hating something—for a change;
And, with his friend, the Vicar, spends his nights

In loading epithets of harmless scorn
On false pretences, and on foolish books;
And on tobacco, and on smoking boys;
And working up a theory, fine-spun,
Of woes nicotian looming o'er the world;—
Deterioration of the human race,
Stunting of stature, drying up of brain,
Shrivelling of beauty, and decrease of years,
All from Tobacco, and its senseless use.
And then the Vicar takes the other side
In a mock combat; wondering much to learn
How Homer could have lived without cigars,
Or Socrates and Esop without pipes;
And how the ancients managed to exist
Quidless and snuffless, tealess, coffeeless,
Without the journal and the printed book.
And ever and anon they change the theme
To higher questions of philology,

Philosophy, and politics, and war:
Or how to raise the funds to build a school,
Or add a trifle to the teacher's dole;
Or read the letter in the morn received
From happy Arthur and his happier bride,
Sailing in Scotland through the Hebrides.

When lovers look upon the selfsame flower,
And feel it beautiful; upon the sky,
Glowing with gold and purple in the West,
Or on the amber splendours of the Morn
Lighting the landscape, or on starry nights
Behold, awe-struck, the living firmament
Ablaze with worlds, reproachful of our pride,
And feel a pleasure words are poor to speak;
How rapturous is the touch of clasping hands,
And what occult transcendent sympathies
Glow in the heart, and elevate the mind,

And link to God, to Nature, and to Man,
The spirits twain made one by happy Love!
Such joy is Edith's, sailing in the West;
Such joy is Arthur's, pensive at her side;
For all the land, magnificently rude,
With isle, and mountain, and far-stretching sea,
And musical with roar of waterfalls,
And murmur of the waves upon the beach,
Appeals where'er they go, where'er they look,
To sympathies benign. Away! Away!
Through changeful scenes of ever new delight!—
On either side the hoary mountain-slopes
Rise like the Titan fathers of the clime,
Lovely in sunshine—beautiful in shade;
Or in their mantles of majestic mist,
Lashed by the storms that bellow through the glens,
Sad as discrownèd kings and potentates
When Revolution surges in the streets,

And angry voices roar for Liberty.
Away! Away! amid the clustering isles,
Through lonely Mulla's melancholy Sound,
" Where every rock, and crag, and jutting point
Hath its own legend and sad history
Of Love or Hate, Ambition or Revenge.

At every turn, what memories awake!
Heroic phantoms shape themselves in cloud—
The spectral forms of chieftains, bards, and kings,
And mighty patriots of the olden time.
And wizard voices murmur on the shore,
Heard of the Fancy—silent to the ear,
" On these blue waves sailed Fingal and his hosts,
Thronging to battle with uplifted spears:
On these grey rocks were Haco's warrior-ships
Battered to fragments: in these straths and glens
The kilted Gael, with heather in their caps,

Raised the loud slogan and ferocious yell,
As chief met chief in sanguinary feud.
And here, great Wallace, freedom's bravest son,
Made Scotland famous in the ennobling war
Of Right against the Wrong. Here, deep concealed
In wild sea caves, or gullies of the rock,
Like David, followed by revengeful Saul,
A desperate and a broken man he lay,
But never lost his confidence in God,
Or love for Scotland.—Here, in moorlands bleak,
The dauntless souls, oppressed for Conscience' sake,
Who held aloft the Bible and the Sword,
And fought with both, came forth on Sabbath-days,
'Mid storm and rain, bareheaded to the sky,
And sang their psalms, with daggers at their hips;
Armed to resist, as if their prayers to God
Were treason to mankind. And here, arrayed

By secret summons—at the storm of drum
And burst of pibrochs wailing on the wind,
Issued Lochiel, and all the gallant hearts,
Who, for a name which grief had rendered great,
And vast calamity had purified
From taint of ancient Wrong, imperilled Life—
Fame, Fortune, Honour—all that men desire
To mend a broken sceptre, passed away
From hands unfit to wield it."

On, still on,
Amid such memories, sailed these loving two
Through Caledonian isles magnificent,
And fed their eyes on fair sublimities
And mingling grandeurs of the Earth and Sea.
Onwards!—still on! To Staffa's echoing cave,
Cathedral of the Ocean—whose high fane
Resounds with voices of the waves and winds,
Chanting for ever holy harmonies,

Such as they chanted in Columba's ears
When first he preached in near Iona's isle
The Gospel of the poor, the sufferer's hope—
The great new law of Charity and Love—
A new law still, and little understood
By warring sects that hate their fellow-man.
And there they linger'd last of all the crowd,
And in that solemn Temple of the Lord,
That vaulted Dome, with porphyry pillars huge,
Not made by human hands, they stood aloof,
Alone and unperceived. With one accord,
They joined their hands in token of their truth,
And joined their lips in token of their love,
And said, without a word, in silent thought
Flashing from eyes more eloquent than tongues,
"Here we renew the promise of the Past,
And in the presence of the Invisible,
In His own Temple, dedicate our lives

To Him and to each other."

Onward still!

Through Morven and Lochaber,—mournful lands,

Once the abode of brave, true-hearted men,

But wildernesses now for sheep and deer,

The appanage of Luxury;—scarcely trod

Save by the shepherd's foot, or, rarer still,

By Crœsus with his gun, or legal drudge,

Set free from briefs and quirks, and Chancery fogs,

From August till November. On! still on!

To Ballahulish and its hills austere,

And wild Glencoe, the saddest spot of ground

On British soil; where every mountain-top

Re-echoes "Murder" when the thunder roars;

And the clear Cona, with reproachful voice,

Croons like a beldam that has known o'ermuch,

And hints of crimes too fearful to be told.

Where shall they turn? To shady Aviemore
And green Craigellachie, embowered on Spey?
Or to the savage haunts and purple wilds,
Where great Ben Nevis wraps his waist in cloud,
And with his bare bald head looks up to Heaven,
Unmindful of the crooked ways of men?
They know not well; but Chance determines them.
But is it Chance or Fate? Whiche'er it be,
They take its guidance, and resolve to rest
A month at Bannavie:—a little space,
Whence daily issuing they may thread the glens,
Or row upon the lake—or scale the heights
Up to the very crown and diadem
Of royal Nevis.

Pleasant were the morns
In those rude solitudes;—pleasant the noons
When the light breeze on Lochlin's azure breast
Invited them to sail;—pleasant the eves,

With their long twilights, lingering silvery-grey
To overtake and mingle with the night,
That scarce was dark enough to know herself
Co-regent of the sky, but for an hour
Between two twilights: pleasant to them both
Were calm and storm, the sunshine and the shade;
For in their hearts were pleasantness and peace,
Which thence o'erflowed and sanctified the world.
They found not Happiness, and sought it not,
But took it with them wheresoe'er they went;
As all must do—or know it nevermore!

So much they loved—so deeply they enjoyed—
So warmly praised their northern solitude,
In frequent letters to the tamer south—
Edith to Rose, the playmate of her youth,
And Arthur to his sire, his heart's true friend—
That ere the June had ripened to July,

And days had shortened, came three visitors,
Westwood, and Trevor, with his daughter Rose,
To tread the grassy slopes, to track the streams,
To breathe the buxom air of seaward glens;
And turn a virgin page of Life's new book—
Ready for memory in a future Time.

CANTO VII.

LOVE ETERNAL.

Love Eternal.

OH, mountain echoes! slumbering in the clefts!
Never did blither company than this
Awake your magic voices with their own,
And fill with gladness the responsive air.
The morn is young; the flowers, the grass, the trees,
And gossamer webs that stretch from branch to branch
Of the red heather or the golden gorse,
Are hung with jewels of the nightly dew,
Which Day, new-risen upon the misty plain,

But old upon the hills, has lighted up,
As if each droplet were a rolling world
Set in the distant heavens to catch its beam.

A careless and a joyous company,
With ponies, guides, and all appliances
To pass the summer day upon the Ben,
They start, these friendly five, from Bannavie,
Clad for the hills, and eager to ascend
To those serene and barren altitudes
Where Nevis looks o'er Scotland and the Isles,
And counts in summer eves his subject hills.

Oh, pleasant morn! and what shall be the night?
The darkest clouds upon the hopeful sky
Are white as feathers of the seagull's wing,
And take no light or promise from the day,

But give it both. Yet, what shall be the night?
They know not—think not—ask not—and 'tis well.

"Nine by the sun, and half-way up the Ben!
Let toil and hunger, and fresh exercise
Receive their due reward. Here let us rest:"
Quoth Westwood to the guides. "This oozing spring
Born in the mountain's breast shall yield us drink,
Dashed with the mountain dew that owes no tax
To our liege lady on the banks of Thames.
Display the breakfast!"

On the broad bare stone
The guides disburthened them of thrifty store
Of oaten cakes, as sweet as scent of briar,
Of butter, fresh as mead ere mowers come,
Of eggs, no older than the summer day.
And appetite, made keen by upland air,
Does honour to the simple festival.

Rose Trevor, merry as the lowland lark,
Left far adown and lilting in the glens,
Eases her sense of superabundant joy
By music's voice, as natural to her
As light to suns, or scent to mountain thyme;
And sings till honest Donald and his boys,
Their guides upon the Ben, in glad amaze
Declare to one another as they tend
The ponies browsing near, that never yet
Was mortal voice so exquisite as this.

Up! up again! There's work that must be done.
The knees of Nevis may be clad in flowers—
His waist may wear a girdle of the pine,
His shoulders may be robed in heath and fern
But his broad neck and high majestic head
Are steep and bare—and he who'd climb, must toil.

Noon on the mountain! glowing, glorious noon!
And they have reached the very topmost top

Of Britain's isle ; the crown above all crowns
Of royal Bens ! Oh, wild sublimities !
None can imagine you but those who 've seen ;
And none can understand man's littleness
Who has not gazed from such dread altitudes—
Upon the world a thousand fathoms down—
O'er precipice of perpendicular rock,
Which but to look at makes the brain to reel,
And fills it with insane desire for wings
To imitate the eagle far below,
And free itself of earth ! And here they stand,
Awe-stricken and delighted ; great, yet small ;
Great that their souls may dare aspire to God,
To whom the mountains and the universe
Are but as dust on the Eternal Shore ;
Small in the presence of those ancient hills
Which stood the same, and evermore the same,
When Abraham fed his flocks on Shinar's plain,

And Job beheld Arcturus and his sons ;—
The same—the same—and evermore the same—
Unweeting of the whirl and spin of Time,
And heedless of the fall of states and kings
And mighty monarchies, that dared to blow
Through slavish trumpets the blaspheming boast—
" The seasons pass—but we endure for ever ! "
Where are they now ? Let Rome and Carthage say,
And Babylon answer, " Dead, and pass'd away ! "

Upon that topmost height within the shade
Of the grey Cairn that shields them from the sun,
Again the board is spread with frugal fare ;
A banquet earned, and seasoned with delight
Of genial converse and the flash of minds,
In great new circumstance unknown before.

Meanwhile, unnoticed, from the glens beneath
Uprolls a sea of mist. The wind hath changed ;
And the fine snow, as sharp as needle-points,

Blows in their faces. Mist, thick mist, pours on,
And so enshrouds them where they sit or stand
That each to each looms spectral and remote—
A thing of shadows in a shadowy land;
The mountain-top and twenty yards around,
The only visible earth; themselves alone
The earth's inhabitants. At times a glimpse
Through drifting clouds that clash against the Ben,
Unveils the world below: Lochiel's blue wave;
And far away a wilderness of hills;—
And then the pageant passes like a thought,
And they are shut in Chaos, as before—
A chaos of upsurging, streaming mist,
From which they may not stir, if they would live.
For all around are yawning pits and chasms,
And on one side a precipice of rock,
Where half-way down the eagle seems a moth,

And crags, as lofty as cathedrals, dwarf
To things scarce bigger than an urchin's toy.

Three hours amid the mist! The guides alarmed,
Betray by rapid looks, yet not by words,
Their growing terror, lest the night should come
And find them still upon the mountain-top.
And now the big rain and the whistling hail,
As large as berries shaken from the bough,
Bursts from the cloud as from a floating sea,
And on their shelterless heads and shivering forms
Pours in fierce torrents. Huddled close as sheep
When winter snows fall sudden on the fold,
They crowd together, wrapping thick in plaids
The tender women. But the drenching storm
Must work its will: and if it rage till night
Cannot, with all its fury, harm them more
Than it hath done in this one gush of Time;

For they are wet as sea-weeds on the rock
When the full tide comes plashing, roaring in,
And must endure the evil; better still,
They turn it into merriment and joy.

Six hours amid the storm! The mist upclears
And they behold again the welcome world
Around them and beneath; and far adown
The straggling remnants of the cloudy host,
Foiled in the assault against the steadfast hills,
Lag in the valleys, broken and confused.
But gathering near on level of their sight,
The anxious guide descries the phalanx huge
Of clouds with blacker bosoms, lightning-fraught.
"Let us descend," he saith; "there's danger near,
And greatest danger on the mountain-top.
There's shelter in the glen; and one hour's march
Will bring us to the ponies. Let's away!"

They start in resolute haste, the guides in front,
Arthur and Edith next, linked hand in hand;
Then Westwood, Rose, and Trevor. Wild and bare
And dark around them lies the wilderness
Of shivered rock and gaunt mis-shapen crag.
Toilsome th' ascent; but perilous and slow
The downward scramble o'er the slippery shale
That yields beneath the foot. But on they press;
For, lo! the gusty rain with fitful whirl
Beats in their faces, and the lightning-burst
Illumines heaven with glare blue-venomous,
And drags behind it in its fiery car
Th' obedient thunder. Lifting up its voice
It shouts to all the hills, which answer back
From cavernous glens and corries far away.
And, lo! the bolt hath fallen where they stood,
And with a crash as if the Ben were riven
To its deep heart, down falls the jutting crag

In multitudinous heaps of splintering stone.
The women shriek in terror; and the men,
With fear-white faces and uplifted hair,
Appeal with eloquent eyes to pitying Heaven
To shield and save them 'mid the war of storms.
Then as the coiling echoes die away,
Press onward, downward, with redoubled haste,
To reach the shelter where their tethered steeds
Await their coming.
Vainly they 'd escape
The region of the thick tempestuous cloud;
For lower down, and filling all the glen,
The mists have gathered; and once more they halt,
Uncertain where to turn, or where to rest.
The guide, at fault, has wandered from the way,
And night is looming. Edith's heart beats high
With hope and courage; Rose's faints and fails.
The men are vigorous, as men should be;

And holding counsel with their high resolve,
Weigh all the chances of the mist and storm,
And how they best shall help their tender ones
To pass the night in safety on the Ben.
They sit, they talk, they know not what to do,
Yet fear no evil greater than the cold,
When suddenly a vista through the cloud,
Unfolds the lingering splendours of the day,
Fading in twilight; and a golden gleam
Into the darkening landscape far adown,
Mountain, and lake, and many a seaward glen.
Edith and Rose, as agile and alert
As dapple fawns that sport upon the hill,
Trip lightly forth, like playmates, hand in hand,
To gaze upon the loveliness beneath,
Upon the seas of curdling cloud and mist
In mighty masses heaving evermore,
And deem that never have their eyes beheld

A vision so sublime. Entranced they stand,
As angels might have stood on Earth's first morn
Upon the mountain peaks of Paradise,
When Chaos, disappearing, trailed his robes
Of shapeless mist the last time o'er the world,
That hailed his absence with her brightest smile,
And leaped to be released.

But creeping slow,
Unseen, unnoticed 'mid their ecstacy—
A cloud that might have covered half the Isle,
Down sailing from the far-off Northern seas,
O'er Grampian summits, clad them round about
So densely, that the ground on which they trod
Became invisible—and their outstretched hands
Faded away into the hungry space,
And their near faces disappeared in cloud.

They called upon the names of those they loved:
Louder—yet louder still—and heard far off

A faint response come shattered up the glen.
" Courage ! " said Edith ; " Courage ! here we stand
Until they rescue us.. To move is death."
The other spake no word, but grasped her hand ;
And ever and anon they heard far down
The voices calling them. " Oh, sister mine !
Sister thou art, and more than sisterly—
Let us be brave. 'Tis but one dark, cold night,
And after night the morn. The rising day
Will clear the blinding mist, and help will come."
They sat them sadly down, but scarce had room
Upon that narrow ledge of shelving rock
To rest their trembling feet or fevered heads.
" Courage ! " said Edith. " Courage ! " answered Rose.
'Twas the last word that either of them spake
In that long night : for sleep, the invincible,
Best friend of mortals, next to friendlier Death,
Pressed on the eyelids of the tenderer flower,

Unwelcome and unasked, but still benign,
And drowned her sorrow in unconsciousness.
Ere morn she woke—and lo! she was alone!
And where was Edith? Brightly shone the sun,
The earth was luminous, the mountain-top
Stood clear and sharp against the bright blue sky,
And every cot and bothy in the glen,
Ay, every tree and boulder miles below,
Was palpably defined: but where was she?
Had she, adventurous, braved the pathless wild,
Or sought the aid of shepherds from the farms
To save her weaker sister? Ay! no doubt!
For she was bold and of a noble heart!
Alas! alas! that Fate, or Providence,
Or Doom, or Fitness—twin-conceived with Fate
Ere Earth began her orbit, or the Sun
Shone in the centre to compel her course,
Should have decreed that this most innocent life

Should be such victim, and that such despair
Should follow on such superabundant joy!
Ah! little did they think who all night long
Mourned for her houseless on that ghastly hill,
And hoped and prayed for coming of the morn,
What utter, unimagined misery
One little moment and one step in the dark
Might bring to many lives so fondly linked
By love, and friendship, and sweet sympathy!

Wakeful—impetuous—eager for the dawn,
That faintly streamed o'er blue Loch Linnhe's wave,
Edith had wandered from the ledge of rock,
To look for aid, that she imagined near,
Unweeting of the precipice beneath,
And lost her footing! With one wild, sharp shriek,
And swiftly as a bird that leaves the cliff
To sail the friendly air, she reel'd and fell—

Down, down, into the treacherous abyss—
Three hundred fathoms down—to certain death.

It was not till the noon—the dreadful noon—
Glaring and gay as if this thing were not—
Glaring and staring in its lusty life—
That they discovered, in the glen below,
The lovely body of the loveliest soul
That ever brought a comfort to the world,
Or took a joy away in going home
To that serener world whose door is Death.
The tender limbs, the white maternal breast,
Were bruised and mangled by the cruel rock;
But it had spared the beautiful bright face
Which seemed as if th' angelic spirit slept,
And might awaken yet, if Love would call.
And Love *did* call, with wild and passionate speech,
With frantic gesture and insatiate kiss

Upon the clay-cold lips that kissed not back,
And on the closèd eyelids of bright eyes
That looked not love again—or looked from Heaven.

For three long months lay Arthur on his bed
Delirious, raving of the love he 'd lost,
And talking to her in uneasy dreams,
As if she lived, and sat beside him still,
An angel at his pillow. But this passed,
And he recovered consciousness and strength,
And walked again into the world of men..
He passed among them, alien to their joys;
For all his thoughts were coloured by his loss,
And to his mind, high-wrought by suffering,
He deemed it sacrilege that he should smile ;
And selfishness that any scheme of life,
Without her presence, should be worth his care.
" Men have no hearts," he said. " Alas ! not so;

'Tis heart, not head, that ravages the world—
'Tis heart that makes the misery of hearts.
And life were happy as a midge's dance,
If heart ne'er taught us that humanity
Is born in—lives in—dies in suffering.

"Since first I lost her, oh, my love's best treasure!
There hath been darkness on the weary day;
A throbbing anguish in the purest pleasure—
Pleasure? Ah, no! Its fair face passed away
With hers still fairer; and its glancing robe,
Mist-woven, vanished from the globe.
I look upon the light of morn,
And wonder, utterly forlorn,
How it can break when she's no longer here;
And when the young buds blow,
Rose-tipped or white as snow,
There seems a want of Pity in our sphere,

That Nature's self should not refuse
The sunshine and the dews,
When she, her sweetest child,
So young and undefiled,
No longer breathes upon the vernal air
The fragrance of her unforgotten bloom—
Lost! lost for ever, in the tomb,
That never yet had habitant so fair.

"Come Day! Come Night!
I note your changes, heedless of them all;
For evermore, betwixt you and my sight,
A sweet face, with a coronal
Of glory, heavenly bright,
Looks down upon me, tinting the long hours
With a celestial paleness. Sleeping, waking,
Ever I see it; till my eyes drop showers,
And make the vision brighter by my weeping;

Brighter—but still more sorrowful to see,
Except when Night lies gently on my brain,
And Sleep restores her to my soul again,
As Death—Sleep's brother—shall in days to be,
If day be word or thing, in God's Eternity.

"Where are my once high thoughts that soared sublime,
My purpose brave;
The hopeful glow and fervour of my prime?—
Low in her grave.
Most little and most mean appear to me
All that the world can offer me again.
Wealth is a froth-bell on a billowy sea,
And power, and pride, and all the gauds of men,
Mere tricks and shadows. Were I Earth's sole king,
To rule all nations by my high behest,
Nor I, nor they, nor all their wealth, could bring

My lost belovèd living to my breast.
Why could I not have known, ere forth she went
To that angelic land where she appears
In her full glory, that she was but lent
For brief, brief space—a halo 'mid my tears?
That in each moment of her perished years
I might have poured upon her radiant head
More wealth of Love than ever heart of man
Poured upon mortal? Let my tears be shed.
No one shall comfort me. And no one can.

"Was she so like an angel in pure guise,
That thou shouldst take her, ere her time, O Death!
To join her sisterhood in Paradise?
Or was the earth too balmy with her breath,
Too radiant with the light
Drawn from the Infinite,
And concentrated on her innocent lips,

That thou shouldst pass, with this too dire eclipse,
And rob us of her beauty? 'Twas unjust
To Earth and Heaven to lay her in the dust,
Ere she had shown us all her wealth of bloom,
Only to feed the avaricious tomb!
Lo! Misery, through long days
Clasps her lean hands and prays
That on her head may all thy shafts be hurled.
Lo! Age and Pain implore
That thou wouldst ope thy door,
And let them ooze into the painless world!
Why pass them? They would bless thy power,
But mine own sweet and early blossoming flower
Adorned the forest, and made bright the place
Where we beheld her in her youthful grace.
The poison weeds grow rank, and taint the air,
While the sweet violets fade, and rose and lily fair.

"Methinks the spirits of the sainted dead,
Whom in their lives we loved, are with us still,
That all around our paths their light is shed;
Pervading witnesses, who at their will
Know all we think or do. Let us be pure.
Let us not give their Immortality
Reason for sorrow or shame. Let us endure
Calmly, though sadly, the all-wise decree
That took them from us: and instead of flowers
To strew upon their graves, or tombs high-piled,
Let us bestow on them unsullied hours,
And innocent thoughts, and actions undefiled."

But these were whispers—spoken to himself.
A deeper purpose settled on his mind,
A dark presentiment—that he should die
When he had ended an appointed task.
"Father," he said, "I feel that I shall live

To finish Edith's portrait. When 'tis done,
I know that I shall die. Nay, argue not;
For by an inner consciousness, and voice
That seems like Edith's whispering in my mind,
I know that this shall be."

And so he wrought
Daily upon the portrait of his love,
That grew beneath his hand—a master-piece.
And oft he'd gaze upon it by the hour,
Imagining some touch—were 't but a hair—
To add resemblance; dallying with the smile
That gleamed upon the lips, or with the glance,
Soul-speaking, of the pensive full dark eyes.
He lived but for his picture: that alone
Had full possession of his mind and heart,
And every faculty. And when at last
The work was done, and Art could do no more,
His mournful prophecy of love and grief

Fulfilled itself: and breathing the one name,
He laid his head upon his father's breast,
And clasped the sympathizing hand, and died.

They sleep together, in one humble grave,
Under the ancient yew that overlooks
The moss-grown portico of Erlwood Church.
And thither every morn a maiden comes
To tend the flowers; and thither every night
A father strays lamenting for his son.

THE END.

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